CALIFORNIA
healthy nail salon
COLLABORATIVE
Liên Hiệp Ngành Móng Tay Lành Mạnh

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Meredith Williams, Deputy Director
Safer Products and Workplaces Program
California EPA, Department of Toxic Substances Control
Meredith.williams@dtsc.ca.gov

Re Safer Consumer Products Regulations, suggested chemical/product combinations

Dear Deputy Director Williams,

We are writing to suggest the following product/chemical combinations to be considered next by DTSC:

1. Nail polish or products/plasticizers including phthalates and triphenol phosphate (TPP), toluene, and formaldehyde.

2. Hair products, especially hair straighteners where heat is used to enhance or activate the function of chemicals/formaldehyde

Who we are.

The California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative (Collaborative) comprises approximately 40 public health and environmental advocates, salon workers and owners, and allies in government agencies. The Collaborative focuses on reproductive and environmental justice and health for the nail salon community through outreach/education, research, and policy strategies. We are an active member of Californians for a Healthy and Green Economy (CHANGE Coalition).

Rationale

On its website, California EPA's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) states that it selected its current set of proposed product/chemical combinations based on: potential exposure to the Candidate Chemical in the product and potential for exposure to contribute to or cause significant or widespread adverse impacts. Although we may not agree as to whether these should be the only bases for the agency's decisions, we believe that with those bases in mind, in addition to chronic health impacts on vulnerable populations and potential for bioaccumulation, our suggestions should be accepted by your agency.

Americans spend anywhere from $35-55 billion annually on cosmetics. Worldwide, the cosmetics industry rakes in a whopping $170 billion, with Americans being the biggest spenders on these products. Even though consumers in the U.S. spend billions of dollars on these products, they are extremely under-regulated.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has limited authority to regulate cosmetics and what little authority they do have, they have often been reluctant to exercise it. The agency is responsible for making sure that products are "safe to use" which is generally construed to mean will not cause acute health effects in a large number of people. This does not address long terms effects such as cancer or reproductive harm.

The state's parallel statutory framework enforced by the Food and Drug Branch of the California Department of Public Health has a similar limited focus and reach.

The use of cosmetics is not a recent phenomenon.

In ancient Egypt, Cleopatra who lived from 69 BC to 30 BC used lipstick that got its hue from ground carmine beetles. Ancient Egyptians also used kohl, a mixture of metal, lead, copper, ash and burnt almonds, all around their eyes.

The ancient Greeks and Romans also painted their faces with powders made of ground-up minerals and stones. Women in England in the time of Elizabeth I painted their faces, necks and chests with a lead and vinegar mixture known as ceruse. Elizabeth's largely hairless upper forehead may have been a result of exposure to the lead in ceruse which would often cause hair to fall out. Ceruse may have also caused muscle paralysis and even death.

Car manufacturing may have jump-started the nail care industry. Henry Ford used black lacquer paint on his vehicles because it dried more quickly than other colors. Other companies began formulating fast-drying lacquer paints in multiple colors to compete. These quick-drying lacquers were co-opted by other businesses, notably cosmetics companies.

The appeal of using cosmetics may have an evolutionary component. Researchers believe that we're evolutionarily wired to seek out appealing faces, no matter the culture in which we live and that we're wired to find youth more attractive than old age due to the evolutionary urge to reproduce. Makeup may be a way to highlight and amplify female features and youth. It's also clear that beauty ideals are shaped by external forces such as advertising and (pop) culture.

Regardless of the reason, many women use more than 20 beauty products every day; more and more men are using some kind of cosmetic product such as hair dye. Women who wear cosmetics every day may absorb as almost 5 pounds of chemicals into their bodies each year. And of great concern is the trend of younger and younger girls who may be more vulnerable to the harmful effects of certain chemicals, using makeup.

Chemicals in beauty products

It's estimated that 10,500 ingredients are used in personal care products. Three chemicals of great concern are dibutyl phthalate (DBP), formaldehyde, and toluene.

Toluene, found in nail polish and removers and hair dyes, has been linked to reproductive problems including miscarriages and temporary neurological symptoms such as headaches and dizziness.

Phthalate exposure in women has been linked to disruption of thyroid hormone levels and adverse reproductive outcomes. Phthalates bioaccumulate and are found in color cosmetics, fragranced lotions, body washes and hair

care products, nail polish and treatment. Some manufacturers may be replacing DBP with triphenol phosphate (TPP) for which there is growing evidence of human toxicity.

Formaldehyde can cause asthma and other respiratory problems and cancer and is found in nail polish, nail glue, eyelash glue, hair gel, hair-smoothing products, baby shampoo, body soap, body wash, color cosmetics.

There are other cosmetics and chemicals of concern that should be targeted soon by the Safer Consumer Products regulatory process. To name just two there is hydroquinone in skin lighteners, facial and skin cleansers, facial moisturizers, hair conditioners, and nail glue which is linked to cancer and organ system toxicity, and nitrosamines which are found in almost every personal care product and are linked with cancer and endocrine disruption.

Who is exposed and especially vulnerable to chemicals in cosmetics?

Salon workers and women and girls of color are especially vulnerable and are highly exposed to many of these bad actor chemicals. In California, there are 122,039 licensed manicurists, most of whom are women of reproductive age. It's estimated that 59-80% are Vietnamese; many have limited English skills often making it difficult to obtain information on chemical products and their health effects. Every day, they handle and breathe the fumes of harmful substances such as solvents, glues, polishes and other products that contain chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer, allergies, respiratory, neurological and reproductive harm, as well as acute symptoms such as rashes and eye, nose, and lung irritation. Formaldehyde in hair straighteners or relaxers is of special concern to hair salon workers who potentially breathe these hazardous fumes several times every day, and women of color who may start using these products regularly at a young and physically vulnerable age.

In conclusion, unlike the times of Cleopatra and the first Queen Elizabeth, we are living and using cosmetics over longer lifetimes, have the advantage of modern science and research, and have vested in our government the responsibility to guard our health and safety. Cosmetics don't have to be dangerous. We hope you take our suggestions to heart and include them in the next round of designating product/chemical combinations pursuant to the Safer Consumer Products Regulatory process.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

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RESOURCES: In addition to the Collaborative's own information, we referred to the following:

For value of the U.S. cosmetics industry, we consulted the following websites:
http://brandongaille.com/26-cosmetics-industry-statistics-and-trends/
http://www.statista.com/topics/1008/cosmetics-industry/
http://www.alternet.org/story/148140/the_cosmetics_racket%3A_why_the_beauty_industry_can_get_away_with_charging_a_fortune_for_makeup
http://www.thebeautycompany.co/downloads/Beyer_BeautyNumbers.pdf
http://www.marketwatch.com/story/10-things-the-beauty-industry-wont-tell-you-1303249279432

Information on cosmetic absorption: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1555173/Body-absorbs-5lb-of-make-up-chemicals-a-year.html

Information on the history of cosmetics: http://people.howstuffworks.com/about-makeup1.htm

Information on chemical ingredients and the cosmetic they're in: http://safecosmetics.org/section.php?id=46.